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SUBJECT: HOW TO SHATTER A CASTRO-PHILE'S ARGUMENTS

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¶1. USINT is pleased to send in this distillation of the best of our briefings and responses to questions about Cuba, usually from audiences that are opposed to U.S. policy towards Cuba. These include foreign diplomats, U.S. university students and professors, U.S. congressmen and staff, U.S. journalists, U.S. trade delegations, U.S. think-tankers.

¶Q. The U.S. embargo (called "blockade" by the GOC and its close allies) has not brought down the Castro regime. Why do you persist with this failed policy?

¶A. U.S. trade and other sanctions are the least we can do to respond, as we must, to a regime that has had a history of totalitarian rule, export of violence and subversion, and unremitting hostility to the United States. It is true that the Castro regime has withstood the sanctions, but it is also true that the USG has been true to its principles by seeking to isolate a regime that is so alien to all that American democracy stands for. We stood firm for 45 years until the USSR and the Iron Curtain collapsed. The collapse of communist rule in Cuba has taken longer, but is just as inevitable.

¶Q. Didn't the U.S. Defense Department come out with a report saying that Cuba is not a threat to the United States?

¶A. Yes, although the report's drafter turned out to be Ana Belen Montes, a woman who was convicted for espionage on behalf of the Cuban regime. Although Cuba may not pose a conventional military threat to the U.S., it clearly demonstrated, with Ana Belen Montes, that it is an intelligence threat. The Cuban regime considers itself an enemy of the USG and is an instigator of anti-American activities all over the world, especially in Latin America. Its functionaries in Venezuela and Bolivia right now are helping leaders there assault those countries' democratic institutions. Cuba is on the list of countries that support international terrorism; any intelligence it picks up from the USA, it can be expected to pass to other rogue states or groups that are enemies of the USA.

¶Q. But aren't we missing out on great trade opportunities?

¶A. Cuba is an impoverished Third World country with a GNP in the neighborhood of 35 billion dollars. The Cuban exile

community in the USA alone, with 15 percent of Cuba's population, has a larger GNP. We can easily handle not trading with Castro's Cuba for however much longer it takes until it becomes a free society. In the mean time, our laws permit sales of agricultural products to the tune of roughly 400 million dollars per year.

Q. But won't the Spanish, other Europeans, Canadians and Asians have a leg up on us for new investment opportunities?

A. Investors in Cuba are buying into an apartheid system that pays virtual slave wages and provides no internationally recognized worker rights. We are surprised that people who protested against apartheid in South Africa or against sweatshops in Mexico or Southeast Asia are not up in arms over working conditions in Cuba, where wages are 15 dollars a month. Cuban citizens also have no right to stay in the hotels that the Europeans and Canadians invest in and frequent as tourists. The question should be: Why would democratic countries in Europe, and Canada, want to do business with a brutal totalitarian government like Cuba? Finally, when Cuba truly opens up its economy, we are confident that American businesses will take full advantage of the opportunity to work with enterprising Cubans.

Q. Isn't the embargo hurting the Cuban people?

A. The Cuban regime's state-run, inefficient economic system is preventing the Cuban people from prospering. This is a deliberate policy, which keeps Cubans so busy scraping by to put food on the table that they have no time or energy left to protest. The embargo aims to deny U.S. resources to the regime, but does not prevent Cuba from obtaining goods and services from other countries.

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Q. If you end the embargo, won't the Cuban regime no longer be able to blame the USG for its problems?

A. If we ended the embargo, the Cuban regime would continue to blame the USG for its problems, either by presenting us a bill for cumulative damage to their economy or finding some other issue. For example, they have completely invented a controversy involving five of their spies that were arrested in the United States and convicted by a U.S. court. The fact that other members of that same spy network confessed and plea bargained has had no effect on the Cuban regime's propaganda campaign.

Q. If you relax the embargo's travel restrictions, wouldn't an influx of American tourists usher in democratic change?

A. Two million Canadian and European tourists per year have not ushered in democratic change. They have put roughly two billion dollars in the pocket of the regime, helped perpetuate an apartheid tourist system, and also, in many cases, participated in sex tourism.

Q. But wasn't Cuba America's brothel and gambling casino before Castro replaced Batista in 1959?

A. There were certainly injustices and political grievances surrounding Batista's rule, but not many economic ones. Cuba was, in the 1950s, a very popular destination for U.S. tourism and investment in many sectors. It was one of the most prosperous countries in Latin America, in terms of GNP, cars and televisions per capita, and also social indicators. More Americans were living in or visiting Cuba than vice-versa; and immigrants from Italy and Spain were streaming in by the thousands.

Q. Isn't it true that Castro's Cuba has set an example to the world in the areas of health and education?

1A. By repeating this mantra, you are unwittingly duped into perpetuating "the big lie." A lie, if repeated many hundreds of times, is still a lie. The Cuban health system was the best in Latin America before Castro took over. The regime invests heavily in the health system but in ways that are inefficient: Cuba has more doctors per capita than Denmark, yet hospitals lack bedsheets and simple medications like aspirins. Health care is politicized, forcing thousands of doctors overseas on "international missions" while Cubans back home are uncared for. Doctors in Cuba spend half their time at political meetings, drawing them away from patient care. Medicine is administered via an apartheid system: The best facilities and doctors are reserved for foreigners, tourists and regime nomenklatura; facilities for ordinary Cubans are no better than in most other third world countries. Ordinary Cubans, even if they have hard currency, are not allowed to buy medications at the best pharmacies, which are reserved for foreigners and nomenklatura.

1Q. But what about education? And that high literacy rate?

1A. Cuba had levels of education and literacy among the top tier of Latin American countries in the 1950s. The Castro regime's literacy campaign claimed to have raised the rate, but did so with a heavy ideological component. Cubans are largely literate, although younger ones nowadays are struggling with basic reading and math skills. Additionally, all through the grade levels they are force-fed propaganda and given grades and opportunities in accordance with their political loyalties (and their parents' political loyalties). Because the Cuban regime restricts access to free information, including the internet, Cubans grow up with limited options for reading and use of computers. They are among the most computer illiterate societies in Latin America.

1Q. But back to health care, isn't it true that Cuba has a world-class low level of infant mortality?

1A. Not necessarily. One problem is with statistics. Even UN and other international statistics are provided by the Cuban regime, which defines the truth in political terms. Additionally, Cuban obstetricians regularly insist on and administer abortions for most pregnancies where there is any suggestion of health risk for the newborns. The high rate of

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abortions has the effect of skewing the numbers in a way that produces better statistics for infant mortality, as well as life expectancy.

1Q. Hasn't Fidel Castro had broad popular support among the Cuban people?

1A. It is impossible to measure how much support Fidel Castro has. Obviously, he has never measured his popularity by free elections. Public opinion polls are not possible because of the climate of fear that pervades Cuba. Spying and reporting on the citizenry is one of the regime's most labor and resource-intensive activities, and is backed by brute force. Stating one's opposition to Castro's rule is a crime, punishable by many years of imprisonment. Unable to vote at the ballot box, Cubans vote with their feet. Emigration from Cuba is massive, and is the desire of most young Cubans. Their preferred destination is the USA, but they settle in many other countries too, including relatively poor ones in Latin America.

1Q. But now that Fidel Castro is incapacitated, shouldn't we sit down and talk with Raul Castro? Isn't he a more pragmatic, nicer guy?

1A. Raul Castro has participated in every aspect of the Cuban regime's totalitarian rule, including mass murder of Cubans and kidnapping of American citizens. We have many grievances to discuss with a Cuban government, but we do not accept that

passing command from a dictator to his brother represents any kind of legitimacy worthy of a change in policy. Raul Castro may be more pragmatic than Fidel Castro; but that's not saying much. Raul Castro himself has stated that he has no intention to change the communist nature of the regime. No, what's not needed is a US/Cuba meeting that legitimizes Raul Castro, but rather a full consultation between the regime and the Cuban people regarding the future of their country.

Q. But we talk to China, and they are a communist country that violates human rights.

A. The USG does not have a one-size-fits-all foreign policy. Our relationship with China has a much different history and its own texture -- including considerable advocacy for human rights in China. Regarding Cuba, no effort to embrace the regime, either by ourselves or any other country, has made a dent in its totalitarian nature.

Q. Isn't U.S. policy toward Cuba held hostage to right-wing exile Cubans in Miami?

A. That question is insulting to Cuban exiles, who have come to America under difficult circumstances and managed to succeed, in the aggregate, based on hard work, education, and other values that have brought about success to any immigrant group that has sought the American dream. To the extent that Cuban Americans have elected leaders with a point of view about Cuba, that is the way our democratic system works, for Cubans, or for any other immigrant community. Opinion polls show that Cuban exiles have a diversity of viewpoints on Cuba and on other political issues; they vote both Republican and Democrat. They know and care more about Cuba than other Americans, so it is normal, and desirable, that they have an impact on U.S. policy. In any case, their wish for democracy and freedom in Cuba is consistent with U.S. policy worldwide.

Q. Aren't Cuban dissidents who receive aid from Miami pawns of U.S. policy?

A. The Cuban democratic opposition is a home-grown response to lack of freedom on the island and grotesque abuses of human rights by the Cuban regime. There are many components to this opposition: Independent journalists, librarians, and teachers; political movements and parties; free labor leaders; human rights monitors; and The Ladies in White. This latter group is made up of relatives of Cuban political prisoners. The U.S. is proud to provide assistance to these people, who in most cases have nowhere else to turn. Who in their right mind would suggest a U.S. policy that turns our back on courageous people seeking freedom?

Q. How can the USG let Posada Carriles walk free? Isn't

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that inconsistent with our counterterrorism policy?

A. In the recent legal proceedings regarding Luis Posada Carriles, the USG was on the side arguing for keeping Posada in jail. A judge ruled differently, and the executive branch must abide by that decision. However, Posada is not now a legal US resident and is subject to expulsion. There are active legal cases regarding his connection to violent crimes that cannot be commented on because they are active cases. As of today, Posada Carriles has been accused of many crimes but not convicted of any of them.

2. We have deliberately made this message unclassified with the hope that it is circulated widely and used to rebut Cuban propaganda.
PARMLY